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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

It's been another hectic week, but not too bad. The weather has been a little more "seasonable" all week, meaning a little cooler than normal. And, we had some Spring showers. I'm ready to get out in the yard and start my usual seasonal routine - getting the lawn and gardens spruced up. And of course, just enjoy the warm sunshine along with a cold drink. It will happen soon enough. I'm almost back in the mood (if I get the time) to renew my Atari archives research and dig out some more of those terrific memories. See, I haven't forgot! Let's get to this week's issue!

Until next time...

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Atari USB Announcement

Yesterday (the 24th) Henrik of Nature (nature.atari.org) did the first enumeration of a USB device on the 16/32bit Atari platform. This has been achieved on the Ethernat by the test program that I wrote for that card and the CTLink.

Coda.

Atari VNC Alpha Release

I created a VNC Client for STiK.

Requires a lot of speed and a fast connection won't hurt either. Also needs an 8-bit chunky video mode (ala video cards in clones) or a 16-bit or 32-bit True-Color mode. Please read the docs and remember it's alpha-ware. ;-)

It is available on my download page. Follow last url in my signature...

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FreeMiNT http://sparemint.atariforge.net/sparemint/ [Free your mind...]
Team Atari http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/stats/team/team_21046.htm›l
L. Pursell http://www.bright.net/~gfabasic/ [AtarIRC, GFA-Basic, Hades060]

DGEM 0.18 Release

Bonjour :)

DGEM is a project that intends to be a Dungeon Master clone.
A new update is available on my website or directly in the folder:
http://rajah.atari.org/files/ -> dgem018.zip (650KB)
Careful: it takes 2.6Mo on HD.

New features for this 0.18 (April 2005, Jaguar Connexion 2K5 release)
+ on characters: eating, drinking, sleeping, homeostatis, death,
  resurrection, weight carried, experience gain, damages, resistance,
  selecting the leader, fatigue, poisoned state, etc.
+ with objects: most are usable now, some can modify characters
  parameters, some can be used in hand, some are with charges...
  For example, the lockpicks may work on some weak keyholes, the rope
  permits to climb down into a pit, some doors can be broken by sword,
  torch burning...
+ magic: all that is not thrown (ie fireball or dispell)
  2 new incantations for zo potion and alcohol.
  try the ’see through wall’ or ’magic footprints’ ;)
+ action: with objects or nothing (with associated sounds), all
  is possible except throwing (magic or object) and shooting.
  try the fluxcage of the powered firestaff.

Coming next : MONSTERS (enfin !) ;)
Throwing objects and casting the remaining spells should come after.

Hope you’ll enjoy.

-- Pierre TONTHAT - Rajah Lone / Renaissance
http://rajah.atari.org

Two New Books and More at AtariArchives.org

The full text of the classic book Artist and Computer is now available online at: http://www.AtariArchives.org/artist/

Published in 1976 and edited by Ruth Leavitt, Artist and Computer profiles 35 pioneering computer artists. The book is still used as reference material in art classes around the world. "Leavitt’s book, Artist and Computer, was an early example of computer artists building a framework into a new genre," according to Gary Svensson, PhD.

"No computer will ever take the place of an artist," reads the book’s

back cover. "But many artists are discovering computers as a new means of self-expression. Some use computers as a medium to create finished pieces of art, while others explore new art forms, using the computer as an idea machine."

It is the 31st classic computer book to be made available at www.AtariArchives.org.

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Also, the full text of the classic book Compute!'s Second Book of Atari is available. Published in 1985, Compute!'s Second Book of Atari offers BASIC and assembly language programming techniques with an emphasis on high-resolution graphics.

http://www.AtariArchives.org/c›2ba/

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In addition, a chapter from Atari In Action!, an unfinished, unpublished book about the Action! programming language, was recently made available.
http://www.atariarchives.org/articles/

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Finally, a new mailing list will send you e-mail alerts when new resources are added to AtariArchives.org and AtariMagazines.com. To subscribe to the low-volume, spam-free mailing list, go to

http://www.atariarchives.org/new.php

and enter your e-mail address in the box.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone and we find ourselves here again. Well, that's just fine with me. This is a comfortable place for me, with good friends and good conversation. All we need is an espresso machine in here and we'll be all set. <grin>

There's lots I want to talk about, but I'm afraid that all the thoughts that have been percolating through my brain all week have suddenly decided to go bye-bye. Don't it just figure?

It looks like we've gotten our formatting problems pretty well worked out now. I'm still not positive of what the problem was, but I'm guessing that it had something to do with an exceedingly long link that was included in one of the posts that caused one of the apps we use to... well, 'choke' on the text, I guess you could say.

At any rate, the boo-boo seems to be all better now, so let’s get to the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

’Don’ asks for help with burning CDs that his ST will "like":

"I seem to be having a bit of a problem with burning a readable CD for my ST. I can read other discs like suzy bee and others but ,I’ve tried to burn files using my windows XP and the ST does not like the discs. Can someone point me in the right direction or tell me what I’m missing."

Adam Klobukowski tells Don to...

"Use other software and burn plain iso9660f disks."

Peter West adds:

"But the problem could also be the actual blanks he used. I have had problems with two TOSHIBA CD-ROMs on my Falcon reading some Maxell disks with coloured (dark-looking) surfaces. Copying them on a PC to a ’silver’ type blank made them readable."

Edward Baiz adds his thoughts:

"The above is correct. You must have software that burns ISO type CD’s. I have a STe and when I use my Atari clone, the Hades060, to burn any CD in the ISO format, the STe can read it perfectly."

Lonny Pursell posts this about one of my favorite utilities for PC (WinDOZE and Linux) and Mac... and now, evidently, for our beloved STs:

"I created a VNC Client for STiK.

Requires a lot of speed and a fast connection won’t hurt either. Also needs an 8-bit chunky video mode (ala video cards in clones) or a 16-bit or 32-bit True-Color mode. Please read the docs and remember it’s alpha-ware.It is available on my download page. http://www.bright.net/~gfabasic/ [AtarIRC, GFA-Basic, Hades060] "

Edward Baiz tells Lonny:

"I must say this is an amazing piece of software that Lonny put together. I must admit I did not know this kind thing existed. The Atari version works great on my Hades under MagicNet (will try it under MintNet as soon as I fix my Mint partition. Right now it is toast). I downloaded a VNC server for my wife’s PC and got it working. Then I booted up the aVNC program in the 32-bit color mode and the PC’s desktop came up in a box. I was thrilled to death when this happened. I noticed that when I moved the mouse on the PC, the pointer on the Hades screen also moved. But if I tried to run a program, the Hades crashed.

I could do this in the 256 color mode, but of course, the graphics where not as good. In the 16-bit mode, the Hades crashed as soon as I ran the aVNC program. Maybe the aVNC program needs an upgrade or I need to fiddle with the settings on the program and/or my Hades. Still, great job Lonny..."

Lonny replies:

"I've been seeing some strange behavior with gluestik. The data is coming in very fast and it may be a buffer overrun somewhere. I keep uploading new versions to my site as I find and fix things. I also accidentally compiled it with the wrong library, so make sure to download at least v0.906.

The darn thing runs here quite well on mint, even for some hours or so and in either of the 3 modes. I am not quite sure where the problems are. Might have to seriously look into actual mint socket calls eventually."

Edward tells Lonny:

"Well version .906 is a little better for me. Still crashes the Hades in the 32/64K modes. May need to try different combo's of the graphic encoding methods. The 256 color mode still runs find, but sometimes the mouse clicks do not register. The 32-bit mode is better and I can move the mouse around, but the computer still crashes when I try to run a program. Also in the 256 and 32-bit color modes I keep getting a message when I move the mouse around. It begins with ()fre and talks about a number being too low and then replacing it with a higher number."

Martin Byttebier adds:

"No crashes here on my Hades running in 16-bit mode (freeMiNT 1.16.2/XaAES). I could surf the net using Opera 8 or Mozilla. I even could read a pdf-file using Acrobat reader 5.

The reaction is rather slow but it works. Now I'm trying to get it running with my Linux box but for some reason no luck so far.

Can someone tell me how to set up Xvnc or tightvnc on Linux (Suse 9.2)?"

Sam F. asks about disk labeling software:

"Where can I find and what is a good program for creating and printing floppy disk labels? I have got to start doing that, I've got floppies lying around everywhere!! Also, is there one for creating cd labels?"

Jean-Luc Ceccoli tells Sam:

"The best IMO is to use a good DTP software, and create your layouts - I use Calamus SL."

Edward Baiz jumps in and says:

"I can agree with that. I did email Sam a small program that I have used with good successful. Runs great on my STe."

Carey Christenson asks about changing video attributes:

"Just wondering if anyone can suggest a program that would change resolutions and color depths. With the program release by LP of aVNC I have to take an interest in raising my color depths especially to true color to be able to see if this program will work. I do have it connecting to my MAC but the screen is all messed up. Any help or suggestions would be greatly appreciated."

Edward Baiz tells Carey:

"The aVNC will give you a messed up screen if you do not have it in the correct color mode. I got a messed up screen when I used it in the 24-bit color mode. Works great for a while in the 32bit mode and works like a charm in the 256 color mode. It was kind of neat controlling and using my wife’s PC from my Hades desktop."

Janez Valant adds:

"No problems here either on Falcon in 16bit mode. AVNC also offers flexible video translating settings, so it can be customised to any chunky mode depth."

Lonny Pursell tells Carey:

"I have made some improvements and released a new version.
The new binary will reject some but not all unsupported modes. If started on a Falcon for the very first time (no config file), it should auto configure itself to the settings for 16-bit mode. I have totally reworked the documentation also.

Started to implement ZRLE decompression until I discovered it was zip-like compression. That being zlib. No way I want to code that from scratch. Anyone know if zlib exists as a shared lib?"

Well folks, that’s it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Video Game Sales Are Up!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Doom 3 Ships For Xbox!!

Atari Flashback 2.0!
And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Video Game Sales Up 23 Percent

Total U.S. sales of video game hardware, software and accessories rose 23 percent in the first quarter of 2005 to more than $2.2 billion, market research firm NPD Group said on Monday.

Growth was lead by portable video game hardware, NPD said, with a 162 percent rise on a dollar basis. That came from the launch of two new handheld game players, Nintendo Co. Ltd.'s DS and Sony Corp.'s PlayStation Portable.

All categories were higher on both a dollar and unit basis, NPD said. The biggest was console games, at more than $1 billion in sales, a 7 percent growth rate. Most analysts expect about 5 percent growth for the year.

The best-selling game in the first quarter was "Gran Turismo 4" from Sony for its PlayStation 2 console, with more than 1.1 million units sold. No other game sold more than 505,000 units in the period.

The $10 billion U.S. video game industry is roughly on par with the domestic movie box office in terms of sales.

Area 51 Ships

Midway Games Inc., a leading developer and publisher of interactive entertainment software, announced today that AREA 51 the story-driven, first-person action thriller has shipped to retail outlets nationwide for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system and the Xbox video game system from Microsoft. AREA 51 will also be available for PC and is scheduled to ship on May 23, 2005. Midway has created an action-thriller that features an intense storyline packed with scripted events, an arsenal of both human and alien weapons, and powerful multiplayer modes that allow up to 16 players to battle it out online.

"Midway is a company with a deep vault of classic gaming franchises and reinventing some of those, such as AREA 51, is a core part of Midway's strategy for 2005 and beyond," said Steve Allison, chief marketing officer, Midway. "Delivering riveting and suspenseful gameplay that no console or PC owner should pass by, AREA 51 is the only first-person action thriller to be set within the confines of the U.S.'s most secret military base."

Rounding out the complete entertainment experience, AREA 51 features a

blockbuster line-up of Hollywood voice talent. Cast in the lead role is David Duchovny, star of the ultimate conspiracy-theory television show, The X-Files, will bring his instantly recognizable voice to AREA 51's lead character Specialist Ethan Cole, a special forces soldier specializing in hazardous materials investigations. Powers Boothe, who currently appears in the HBO mini-series Deadwood, will provide the voice of Major Bridges, while shock-rocker Marilyn Manson will deliver an unforgettable performance as Edgar, the gray alien.

The U.S. Army has received a distress signal from Area 51 where a viral outbreak has just shut down the research facility and the automated quarantine procedures have locked all scientific and military personnel inside. A small Special Forces unit led by Specialist Ethan Cole of the HAZMAT (hazardous materials) Division is sent to investigate. As Cole, players will delve into five massive levels within the confines of Area 51, discovering a deadly mutagenic side effect of the virus that controls the minds of those infected, as well as an ancient alien colony buried beneath the facility. With a multitude of human and alien weapons, players must explore chilling conspiracies such as the extraterrestrial crash at Roswell and the faked lunar landing, in order to solve the enigma of Area 51 before the viral mutagen is released and irrevocably mutates all life on Earth.

Great Games Never Go Out of Style

In response to consumer and retailer demands, Atari, Inc. announced the summer launch of Atari Flashback 2.0, the follow-up to the holiday 2004 hit, the Atari Flashback Classic Game Console, which shipped more than 550,000 units to retail. Atari Flashback 2.0 will be modeled after the pioneering Atari 2600 console and heralds in the 30th anniversary of Pong, the first arcade game created for the home which started the revolution that has today turned into a $10 billion industry.

The Atari Flashback 2.0 will feature Pong as well as 40 other classic games including Asteroids, Centipede, Millipede, Lunar Lander, Breakout, Missile Command, Combat as well as retro game and arcade classics that have never before been released for the home console. Atari Flashback 2.0 will feature the same wood grain paneling and look of the Atari 2600, and will capture the feel through two classic joysticks for multi-player competition and vintage controls.

"The Atari Flashback series harkens back to the early days of video games where the simplicity of design and the addictive game mechanics connected instantly with audiences of all ages. Even in this day of advanced and more complex gameplay, these legacy games continue to elicit fantastic reactions via the on-screen action, and again, to a wide and broad audience," said Wim Stocks, Executive Vice President, Sales, Marketing, Licensing and Distribution. "Now, on the 30th anniversary of Pong - the grandfather of all video games - it is fitting that we begin to commemorate this milestone with the launch of Atari Flashback 2.0."

The Atari Flashback 2.0 promises to deliver the same gaming sights, sounds and action as the original Atari 2600. To ensure this authenticity, Atari has engineered the tools and code of the original games for reproduction on modern chip technology.

"Unlike other nostalgia gaming products on the market, the Atari Flashback is the real McCoy and the games included are originals, not third-party

ports," said Curt Vendel, president of the Atari Historical Society and contributing producer for Atari Flashback 2.0. "Atari has traveled back in time to recall an era where the experience was paramount to the technological bells and whistles."

Developed by Atari, the Atari Flashback 2.0 will be available early this summer for under $30 at retailers nationwide.

’Doom 3’ Debuts for Xbox

If your bloodlust somehow wasn’t satisfied after vaporizing the umpteenth demon in last year’s PC version of "Doom 3," id Software Inc. has released a reworked Xbox version and an expansion pack for the PC with even more carnage.

In many respects, the Xbox version ($50, M-rated) is superior to the PC edition of this first-person shooter.

The stunning graphics remain largely intact, as do the hair-raising shrieks and moans of the zombies and hellish minions.

The overall sound design is excellent, with low-pitch reverberations of machinery, hissing steam vents and muffled, distant whispers perfectly complementing the already gruesome, unsettling visuals.

The story occurs on a Martian base where high-tech experiments have opened a portal to hell. Of course, you’re the only gunslinging space marine with enough firepower to send the baddies back where they came from.

You’ll spend much of your time running from one pitch black chamber to another, searching for access codes and levers to open doors and advance to the next level. At regular intervals, a cast of demons and zombies spawn before you in a flash of lava-red light or leap from janitor closets and other dark recesses.

After an hour, you know what to expect. Yet it’s a horror formula that never fails to deliver. I’ve played through "Doom 3" many times now - and it still gives me the creeps.

Its gameplay is a bit behind the times in some respects. For example, you can’t peek around corners or dually wield a weapon and a flashlight to see what’s lurking in the dark distance. The best strategy: run into the fray, shoot anything that moves and pray you don’t run out of ammo (or life).

By far the best addition in the Xbox version is cooperative multiplayer, a feature not available on the PC.

Not only is it just plain fun to play with a buddy over Xbox Live, it’s somehow reassuring to know I’ll never have to traipse through monster-filled chambers alone again. This feature alone makes it worth owning both versions of the game.

For the PC, the "Resurrection of Evil" ($30, M-rated) expansion pack adds more of what fans want: more weapons, more monsters and more terrifying levels, including some much-needed multiplayer extras. Note: You must have the full version of "Doom 3" to play "Resurrection."

It’s been awhile since the events in "Doom 3."

This time around, your cache of available weapons is expanded to included a powerful double-barrel shotgun and a grabber gun that lets you snag debris and fireballs, then shoot them at enemies. "Half-Life 2" used an uncannily similar gravity gun, but to much greater effect.

Another nifty gadget is a heart-shaped artifact that slows down time, makes you invincible for short periods and generally helps you tear through enemies with ease.

One of the biggest problems with the original "Doom 3" was its mediocre multiplayer ability, where friends and strangers could gather online and fight each other. The shortcomings have been partially addressed in "Resurrection," though I doubt it will be enough to pry online shooter fans away from existing games like "Unreal Tournament 2004."

What "Resurrection" offers is a more strategic capture-the-flag mode besides the kill-or-be-killed death-match mode. And though still a bit on the small side, "Resurrection" allows up to eight players - still a pittance compared to the multiplayer offerings found in most first-person shooters.

Three and a half stars out of four for the Xbox version of Doom 3, two and half stars for "Resurrection of Evil."

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Microsoft Gives Details on Windows Release

Microsoft Corp.’s ambitious plan to keep data safe on PCs will make a scaled-down debut in the next release of Windows, though the operating system’s most anticipated improvements in graphics appear to mirror what’s now available from rival Apple Computer Inc.

The long-delayed Windows upgrade, code-named Longhorn and now expected in December 2006, has been touted as the most significant update to the ubiquitous operating since Windows 95 launched in 1995.

On Monday, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates demonstrated Longhorn’s new graphics and other features, which include better ways to visualize data such as seeing through windows that are stacked atop each other, more natural file organization and faster searching.

He also promised better performance and reliability - but hinted it’s possible the final release could be delayed further.

"Our key goal in terms of Longhorn is that it be the highest-quality release we’ve ever done," Gates said. "At every stage of the way we’re

going to listen to feedback, so it’s possible some of these milestones will change and we’ll choose to put more time into things."

And though he spent only a few minutes on security in his speech, Gates said it was the most important improvement and had received the most attention by developers.

"If you had to take one area where we put the most investment in, the security area would be the head of that list by a significant amount," he told the audience at the Windows Hardware Engineering Conference.

Longhorn is the first Windows version to implement Microsoft’s vision of boosting security by placing cryptographic keys in special silicon chips that would be built into PCs. Currently, such encryption locks are stored as data on a hard drive. It is, however, much more difficult to crack a chip.

The security chip in computers running Longhorn would thus render sensitive files inaccessible if someone tried to boot the machine from a portable hard drive or floppy disk.

The security initiative - once code-named Palladium but later christened the Next Generation Secure Computing Base, or NGSCB - was announced in 2002 and was quickly attacked by privacy advocates, Microsoft critics and others as a mechanism by which commercial interests might wrest control of PCs from their owners.

Some claimed it would enable strict copyright protection schemes for music, movies and software. It also could restrict the tinkering that has driven computer industry innovation over the years, they said.

But secure startup isn’t expected to be as controversial as chip-based rights management. Microsoft has not said, however, how else Longhorn might interact with the chip, though security features are expected that would make it more difficult for online criminals to break into PCs.

Neil Charney, director of product management in Microsoft’s Windows group, said the secure startup feature is most likely to be used by business computers, especially in laptops that store sensitive data that could come back to haunt companies after a theft.

A number of companies, including Microsoft, are working together to beef up security using a combination of hardware and software. NGSCB is just one approach, though it’s likely to have the most impact given Microsoft’s dominance.

Some PC vendors, including IBM Corp. and Hewlett-Packard Co., have been offering PCs with security chips for years. On Monday, HP announced it will support Longhorn’s implementation on some of its business computers and workstations.

Ted Schadler, a Forrester Research analyst, said Microsoft appears to have taken advantage of an opportunity with Longhorn to build security into the software from the start. Previous versions of Windows often were criticized for being too vulnerable and buggy.

The bulk of Gates’ speech covered Longhorn’s visual and organizational features - which Apple CEO Steve Jobs described last week as "shamelessly" copying his company’s Mac OS X operating system.

"They can’t even copy fast," Jobs said at his company’s shareholder meeting.

Indeed, many of the features that Gates demonstrated Monday have been a part of the Mac OS since it was released in March 2001.

And some of Longhorn’s organizational tools, such as faster searching and virtual folders that populate with documents based on the information they contain, are expected to be part of the version of Mac OS X that goes on sale Friday.

"Microsoft will have a year and a half to add some bells and whistles to allow it to claim some differentiation," said Dwight Davis, an analyst at the research firm Summit Strategies.

Charney said improved searching will work even without an updated file system, which is the method the computer uses to organize and store information. WinFS, the updated file system that was originally supposed to ship with Longhorn, is now slated to be available in a preview release in late 2006.

Some analysts said Microsoft’s biggest challenge with Longhorn will be to make it so much better than Windows XP that consumers who like XP will want to upgrade.

"People look at XP and say it’s good enough. The challenge with Longhorn is ... to be a lot better than Windows XP ... and right now, I haven’t seen anything that indicates that Microsoft is going to reach that threshold."

Apple’s Tiger Begins To Prowl, Set for Release Friday

Apple has kicked its flagship operating system into a higher gear, temporarily stealing the thunder from arch-rival Microsoft by unleashing Tiger with some 200 enhancements to the Mac platform that already has a strong, cult-like following.

Among the new features is Spotlight, enabling faster, more efficient desktop searches, and a Dashboard comprising mini-applications called widgets that are programmed to deliver to the desktop continuous updates on information, such as flight schedules, stock quotes and weather forecasts.

With spotlight, users can search the entire system, including the metadata inside files such as the type of content, the author, edit history, format and size. Results are continuously updated as files change, and can be stored in smart folders or smart mailboxes.

The Automator feature allows users to automate certain, repetitive tasks, while the latest iChat application provides video conferencing capabilities along with instant messaging.

Tiger also adds the high-definition QuickTime 7 video format and a new version of the Safari Web browser with support for Really Simple Syndication (RSS) data feeds.

Built on a Unix foundation, Mac OS X Tiger supports both 64-bit and 32-bit applications. Compatibility with Windows has been improved as well, Apple announced. The cost is US$129 per user, or $199 for a Family Pack. The

official launch will be held Friday.

The much-anticipated software upgrade is touted by Apple as the answer to Microsoft’s Longhorn, a test version of which was launched by Microsoft earlier this week. Longhorn will include similar versions of the search and content organization features of Tiger, but Longhorn won’t be available until the end of next year.

Apple made a concerted effort to unleash Tiger before Longhorn, much to the delight of its committed user base, but the company is fighting a decidedly uphill battle against Microsoft, said Yankee Group analyst Laura DiDio.

"Mac users are clamoring for this, but the question is whether Apple will build on its core constituency," she said, noting that the company holds a 4 percent share of the desktop OS market.

Still, in talking with I.T. administrators, DiDio said she heard from those in the media and marketing industries, especially, that Mac is making comeback. "The technology is user-friendly and reliable, and those using them are pressing for Apple upgrades."

Spotlight is particularly compelling, the analyst said, describing it as both fast and elegant, and as an alternative to Longhorn’s search-by-category features.

DiDio suggested that while Apple sees Microsoft as its prime target, the Mac could make inroads on the Linux user base because of its Unix-based OS. "It’s proprietary software, so there is indemnification protection, and Unix may be seen as a more reliable platform than Windows."

Web Server Attacks, Defacements Increase

Web server attacks and Web site defacements have risen by 36 percent, according to a report released at the ongoing Infosecurity Europe trade show by Zone-H, which aggregates statistics on Web server cyber crimes.

Last year, global attacks on network servers and corporate Web sites numbered almost 400,000. The report also found that currently 2,500 Web servers are successfully hacked each day out of the 45 million servers in existence.

These figures are especially disheartening when compared to data recently released by Symantec. In its bi-annual Internet Security Threat Report covering the last six months of 2004, Symantec found that most hack attacks are focusing on Web applications such as browsers.

In essence, firewall protection of the server only protects against a certain percentage of attacks - which, according to the Zone-H report, are rising.

Zone-H also noted a rise in the targeting of government Web sites and Internet operations.

It found that there were 186 special attacks on U.S. government servers, 49 special attacks on U.S. military servers and 3,918 special attacks on worldwide compromised governmental domains.

The Zone-H report concluded with the projection that these numbers will surely rise, perhaps as high as 80,000 hacks every day, once third-generation VoIP phones enter the mainstream.

"Once GSM telephone platforms are replaced by VoiP-3G phones which work in the same way as Internet servers - they each might have their own IP address - the number of Web servers will increase to 1.5 billion," said Zone-H founder Roberto Preatoni.

"Each of these phones/terminals will be potentially subject to the same vulnerabilities as traditional web servers and personal computers and by a process of simple multiplication there could be as many as 80,000 hacks a day on these devices."

Recognizing this threat, a consortium of companies formed to work on finding common ground on security measures earlier this year.

Called Voice over IP Security Alliance, the group already has announced a handful of short-term projects to protect VoIP networks. They include establishing security standards for network infrastructure, creating best-practice guidelines and developing tests for VoIP equipment.

The same problems that have plagued security efforts in the general Internet community, though, are likely to be replicated in the VoIP environment, Yankee Group analyst Jim Slawsby said.

"Most of the security technology now available is specific to vendors or to protocols, and it may be difficult to establish a single-vendor solution."

New Virus Count Nearly Triples

The number of new viruses has almost tripled in the last six months, an anti-virus vendor said Tuesday, the spike fed by hackers releasing scads of variants to overwhelm defenses.

According to Panda Software, which is headquartered in Spain but has U.S. offices in Glendale, Calif., the count of new viruses has increased 278 percent since the third quarter of 2004.

"Until now, daily updates were considered sufficient for keeping a computer protected from new viruses, and it is exactly this belief that the creators of malicious code are now looking to exploit," said Luis Corrons, the director of Panda’s research lab, in a statement. "If they can launch many variants, those that appear after the user has incorporated the new vaccines to their anti-malware solution will have no less than 24 hours to infiltrate the system before the following update."

The trend is a continuation of one seen in early 2004, when the writers of Bagle, MyDoom, and Netsky engaged in a back-and-forth battle, sometimes releasing multiple versions in a single day.

Panda pegged the prolific Mytob worm, which first appeared in February, as the leader in the more-is-better strategy, with 74 variants at last count. Other examples that Panda highlighted were the Kelvir worm (25 version) and Bropia (36). Even older worms are in the action, added Panda: since January 2005, 35 Bagle and 32 MyDoom variants have appeared.

Although Panda, and some other anti-virus firms, roll out new definition files more frequently than daily, Corrons recommended combining "reactive" software such as anti-virus programs with proactive detection technologies capable of detecting malware without having prior knowledge of the threat. Such intrusion detection systems (IDS) typically watch for behaviors that shout "malicious code," rather than compare a potential virus to a signature.

Critical Flaw Found in Netscape

A "highly critical" unpatched vulnerability in the Netscape browser could potentially allow hackers to compromise Internet users' systems, according to an advisory from a Danish security firm.

The buffer overflow vulnerability could cause the browser to crash. In addition, hackers could create Web sites to exploit the flaw, executing code of their choice on visitors' computers to gain access to users' systems, security company Secunia warns.

The vulnerability has been confirmed in Netscape version 7.2 and has been reported in version 6.2.3, according to the advisory, released late Tuesday. Other versions may also be affected, it says.

Secunia advised Netscape users to switch to another browser until the vulnerability is patched, labeling it "highly critical."

The vulnerability is related to a previously reported flaw in the Mozilla browser, which shares some code with Netscape, Secunia Chief Technology Officer Thomas Kristensen says. The Mozilla vulnerability has already been patched, he says.

"It's been a while since Netscape has been patched so there's reason to be concerned," Kristensen says.

It is a severe problem because there is no effective workaround, he adds.

Beware How You Google

A simple misspelling of Google's domain name could lead to a Web surfer's worst nightmare.

In a new twist to the old practice of "typosquatting," virus writers have registered a slight variation of Google Inc.'s popular search-engine site to take advantage of any users who botch the spelling of the google.com URL.

The malicious site, googkle.com, is infested with Trojan droppers, downloaders, backdoors and spyware, and an unsuspecting user only has to visit the page to be at risk of computer hijack attacks, according to a warning from Finnish anti-virus vendor F-Secure Corp.

When googkle.com is opened in a browser, two pop-up windows are immediately launched with redirects to third-party sites loaded with scripts. One of the sites, ntsearch.com, downloads and runs a "pop.chm" file, and the

other, toolbarpartner.com, downloads and runs a "ddfs.chm" file, F-Secure said.

"Both files are downloaded using exploits and they contain exploits themselves to run embedded executable files. One of the Web pages of the 'toolbarpartner.com' website downloads a file named 'pic10.jpg' using an exploit. This JPG file is actually an executable that replaces [the] Windows Media Player application," the warning reads.

The typosquatters also launch a steady stream of pop-up Web pages with different .exe files.

One batch of exploits loads a malware package that includes two backdoors, two Trojan droppers, a proxy Trojan, a spying Trojan and a Trojan downloader.

It is not yet clear if the attack vector takes advantage of an unpatched version of Microsoft Corp.'s Internet Explorer. Redmond officials could not be reached for comment.

Read details here about recent "cloaking" accusations against Google.

According to F-Secure's alert, the attack scenario also includes a separate Trojan dropper that copies itself to the Windows System folder with a random name and drops a DLL that modifies the HOSTS file to block connection to several anti-virus Web sites.

Another executable also drops a DLL file into the Windows System folder and prompts a fake virus alert on a desktop. The fake alert warns the user about a computer infection and prompts the user to yet another malicious site promising virus protection.

The Web site offers links to several different sites offering anti-virus and spyware cleaners for download. Those downloads all turn out to be a "toolbar.exe" file that is actually an adware installer, which installs a spyware toolbar known as "Perez," F-Secure said.

The practice of typosquatting was first spotted in the late 1990s and was a common tactic for pornography sites, used to generate traffic from misspelled Internet addresses.

Spitzer Sues Intermix Over 'Spyware'

New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer sued a major Internet marketer Thursday, blaming it for secretly installing software that delivers nuisance pop-up advertisements and can slow and crash personal computers.

Spitzer accuses Intermix of redirecting computer users to Web sites where ads get displayed, adding unnecessary toolbars to Web browsers and delivering unwanted ads that pop up on computer screens.

A six-month investigation found that the company installed a wide range of advertising software on countless personal computers nationwide, with more than 3.7 million downloads directed at New Yorkers alone, Spitzer said.

"Spyware and adware are more than an annoyance," Spitzer said. "These fraudulent programs foul machines, undermine productivity and in many cases

frustrate consumers' efforts to remove them from their computers. These issues can serve to be a hindrance to the growth of e-commerce."

Christopher Lipp, senior vice president and general counsel for Intermix, denied promoting or condoning spyware, saying its toolbars and redirect applications do not collect personal information on computer users.

He added that "many of the practices being challenged were instituted under prior leadership, and Intermix has been voluntarily and proactively improving these applications and related consumer disclosure and functionality for some time."

In a separate move, CNET Networks Inc. announced it was removing nearly 600 programs from its popular Download.com service under a new ban on "adware," or software for distributing advertising. CNET already had a ban on spyware.

"Our decision to expand our ban from just spyware to all forms of bundled adware is based on user feedback," said Scott Arpajian, senior vice president of Download.com.

Citing privacy, Arpajian would not identify the programs removed, but said few were very popular. He also said he did not know whether Intermix's products was among them.

According to Spitzer, Intermix owns and operates such Web sites as mycoolscreen.com, cursorzone.com and flowgo.com, which advertised screensavers, games and other software available for download. Though those programs are free, they often carry other software for delivering ads and can interfere with normal computer use, he said.

One of the company's ad-delivery programs, "KeenValue," delivered pop-up ads while another program, "IncrediFind," redirected Web addresses to Intermix's own search engine, Spitzer said.

The ad software sometimes comes without notice, or if a user was asked permission, it was often through a vague reference in a lengthy licensing agreement that could be misleading or inaccurate, investigators said.

The programs sometimes omitted "un-install" applications and couldn't be removed by most computers' add/remove function, Spitzer said.

Spitzer's civil suit accuses Intermix of violating state General Business Law provisions against false advertising and deceptive business practices. He also accuses them of trespass under New York common law.

Spitzer, after taking on Wall Street and the insurance industry, is taking a harder look at Internet companies he believes are stunting the growth of e-commerce.

"We are looking across the industry at these practices because it really does go to the core of e-commerce," said Kenneth Dreifach, chief of Spitzer's Internet Bureau, "Increasingly, people don't feel in control."

Some repair shops blame spyware for more than half the trouble they're seeing.

"Spyware is creating tremendous problems," said Tony Thompson of Blue Coat Systems Inc., an antispyware vendor. Help desk technicians "are getting inundated about complaints of machines running poorly and taking a long

time to boot up."

The advertisers, which include Fortune 500 companies, aren't targeted.

Dreifach said negotiations with the company didn't result in a settlement, and more cases are possible.

"One of Internet users' biggest frustrations today is unwanted software that sneaks onto computers without their owner's consent and cannot be uninstalled," Ari Schwartz, the Associate Director Center for Democracy and Technology, "The practices alleged in this case are widespread on the Internet."

EU Says to Take Steps if Microsoft Doesn't Comply

The EU's anti-trust chief met Microsoft's CEO in Brussels and warned him that the tech giant must stop abusing Windows' virtual monopoly or face action, the European Commission said on Wednesday.

European Union Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes and Steve Ballmer met at short notice late on Tuesday at Microsoft's request to discuss its failure to comply with a March 24, 2004, decision setting out steps the company must take.

"What Mrs Kroes said is that the Commission expects the decision ... to be complied with urgently and in full, and she added that unless this was the case that the Commission would be obliged to take formal steps to ensure compliance," Commission competition spokesman Jonathan Todd said.

"For the moment we are still not satisfied," he told a news briefing.

Todd declined to give any details of what Ballmer said in the meeting and a Microsoft spokesman would only say Tuesday's talks were "part of the ongoing dialogue" with the EU regulator.

Last year the Commission ruled that Microsoft abused the near-monopoly market position of the Windows operating system to crush competition.

The software giant was ordered to disclose information to rival makers of work group servers to enable their products to work interoperably.

The Commission, which polices competition in the EU, also levied a record fine of 497 million euros ($653.3 million) on Microsoft and ordered it to sell a version of Windows without its Media Player audiovisual software.

If Microsoft fails to comply with the EU's decision, the company could ultimately face daily fines of up to $5 million, which is 5 percent of its worldwide daily turnover.

The Commission has authority to rule against Microsoft since the U.S. company does significant business in the EU.

Microsoft has repeatedly said it wants to strike a deal with the Commission.

But the EU executive has each time responded that Microsoft must fully meet the conditions it has laid down.

Todd said Microsoft had still to comply on the issues of interoperability and making a fully-functional version of Windows available without the Media Player.

Asked about the question of a trustee to oversee the implementation of the Commission's decision, which until now has been a source of dispute between Microsoft and Brussels, Todd said: "It is not regarded as being a major outstanding issue."

Coalition Forms To Protect Cookies

A coalition of agencies, publishers and measurement firms hopes to head off a consumer revolt against Internet tracking cookies.

Safecount brings together online ad industry leaders to discuss steps to insure the reliability of cookies, which are used throughout Internet advertising for measurement, targeting, frequency capping and research. The group said it would work to safeguard consumer privacy while improving counting systems for advertisers. Surveys by Nielsen//Net-Ratings and Jupiter Research suggested over 40 percent of users delete cookies from their computers monthly.

"There are beneficial reasons for consumers to want to have these tools in place," said Cory Treffiletti, svp and managing director of Isobar's Carat Interactive, San Francisco. "We need to support the proper measurement and counting methods out there."

Much of the concern stems from spyware-removal software, which often identify Internet cookies as spyware. Treffiletti blames these companies for "preying on consumer fear" of identity theft. He said Safecount hopes to work with the firms to separate cookies from malicious tracking programs.

The group's 19 founding members include agencies Carat, Interpublic Group's Universal McCann, WPP Group's mOne and aQuantive's Avenue A/Razorfish; publishers like MSN and About.com; and research firms Dynamic Logic and Luntz Research.

Reports in March of the demise of cookies sent tremors through the online ad industry, since without them the Internet would lose its major advantage on many media: measurability. Though research released last week by aQuantive's research unit suggested the cookie surveys greatly exaggerated actual deletion, Nick Nyhan, CEO of Dynamic Logic, said they are a warning shot for advertisers as tracking spreads to other media.

"We want to provide a way for the industry as whole to learn and to come to some consensus," he said.

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